





Developing a Conceptual Model of School Truancy Based on Parental Conflict and Parenting Style in High School Students

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ABSTRACT

Objective: One of the problems that affects students, families, society, and education is school truancy. The objective of this study was to present a conceptual model of school truancy based on parental conflict and parenting style in high school students.

Methods and Materials: The present research method was descriptive-structural modeling, which examined the relationship between the predictor variable, the criterion variable, and the mediator variable. The research population included all high school students in Islam Abad Gharb during the 2020-2021 academic year. The sampling method of this study was a two-stage cluster sampling. In this way, two regions were randomly selected from the areas of Islam Abad Gharb, and from these two regions, five schools were randomly selected, totaling 500 students. Data were obtained using the Parent-Child Relationship Scale by Fine et al. (1983), the School Truancy Scale by Khormae and Saleh Ardestani (2015), and the Parenting Style Questionnaire by Buri (1991). Data were analysed with SEM method using AMOS-24.

Findings: The results showed that the path coefficient between the subscales of the parent-child relationship, including involvement and school truancy ($p = 0.001$, $\beta = -0.19$), positive feelings and school truancy ($p = 0.001$, $\beta = -0.43$), and communication and school truancy ($p = 0.001$, $\beta = -0.23$), were negative and significant. However, anger and school truancy ($p = 0.001$, $\beta = 0.23$) were positive and significant. Additionally, authoritative parenting style ($p = 0.001$, $\beta = -0.52$) was negatively and significantly related to school truancy, while permissive parenting style ($p = 0.001$, $\beta = 0.59$) and authoritarian parenting style ($p = 0.001$, $\beta = 0.36$) were positively and significantly related to school truancy.

Conclusion: It can be concluded that school truancy based on parental conflict and parenting style is predictable in high school students.

Keywords: School Truancy, Parental Conflict, Parenting Style, Students.

1. Introduction

Students are considered the most important and fundamental element in the education system (Owusu et al., 2022). All measures and forecasts in policy planning and provisions in this system ultimately lead to students, as the ultimate goal of education is to prepare and create the necessary competencies in them for entering a society they will themselves construct (Virtanen et al., 2023; Virtanen et al., 2022; Virtanen et al., 2020). Undoubtedly, the more attention is paid to student-related issues, and the more they are addressed, the stronger and more stable the future structure of society will be (Filkin et al., 2022). One of the problems that affects students, families, society, and education is school truancy (Virtanen et al., 2023).

School truancy refers to any intentional, unauthorized, and illegal absence from school, which is different from permanent absence (Lasky-Fink et al., 2021). Attendance at school without participating in classes can also indicate school truancy. Generally, school truancy can be defined as the behavior of being absent from school and classes. According to Baskerville (2021), these students may leave home with the intention of going to school but do not attend school or escape from school to engage in activities they prefer outside of school (Baskerville, 2021). School truancy is a type of deviant behavior that is more commonly observed in upper-grade students. Refusal to go to school and school avoidance are other similar concepts to school truancy (Martin et al., 2020). The common feature of these concepts is the physical absence of students from school (Ruhani Mat et al., 2022). School truancy is a behavioral problem that, in addition to wasting costs and causing financial harm to education, also has unpleasant consequences for society, individuals, and families. School truancy is a potentially negative factor for students, families, schools, and society, which highlights the necessity of understanding the backgrounds, causes, and related factors of this behavioral phenomenon (Virtanen et al., 2023; Virtanen et al., 2022; Virtanen et al., 2020). Considering the key role of students in their own lives and educational paths, this study takes into account personal factors (academic self-regulation and academic vitality), familial factors (parental conflict and parenting styles), and environmental factors (teacher-student relationships) as predictors of the tendency toward school truancy.

As mentioned, one of the underlying factors in school truancy is student-related personality factors. In this regard, self-regulation is one of the personality variables that seems

to play a fundamental role in school truancy (Zimmerman, 2023). Self-regulation is a dynamic and lively process in which learners, by choosing goals for themselves, try to control their cognition, behavior, and motivation in line with their desired goals (Balashov et al., 2021; Valenzuela et al., 2020). In fact, academic self-regulation is a process through which individuals actively influence their learning by choosing their goals, planning, and using various strategies (Valenzuela et al., 2020).

In addition to academic self-regulation, academic vitality is another personality variable considered an effective antecedent to school truancy, and it is presumed that academic self-regulation predicts academic vitality. Academic vitality is defined as learners' ability to succeed in facing academic obstacles and challenges that are commonly present in the academic path (Kritikou & Giovazolias, 2022); it also refers to the positive, constructive, and adaptive response to various challenges and obstacles experienced in the continuous and ongoing field of education (Putwain et al., 2022). Disinterest, fatigue, and academic burnout are considered the opposite of academic vitality. When an individual engages in a task spontaneously, not only do they not feel tired and hopeless, but they also feel an increase in energy and power (Yaarmohammadi Vassel et al., 2021). Generally, the feeling of inner vitality is a significant indicator of mental health, which provides the grounds for creative thinking (Hirvonen et al., 2020).

As mentioned, one of the underlying factors in school truancy is student-related familial factors. In this regard, parental conflict and parenting styles are among the familial variables that seem to play a fundamental role in school truancy (Graham et al., 2021). Conflict, meaning opposition between two or more people, seems to be inevitable in parent-child relationships, especially during adolescence (Mastrotheodoros et al., 2020). Parental conflict refers to the communicative and conflicting challenges that arise during the growth and change of family members (Chung et al., 2023). Conflict with parents indicates the presence of a gap between children and their parents. In this inconsistent situation, parents consider adolescents to be incompatible, and adolescents do not accept their parents' behavior (Westrupp et al., 2023). Many studies have examined the relationship between parental conflict and the behavioral and psychological performance of adolescents, indicating a mutual relationship between parent-adolescent conflicts and problematic behaviors in adolescents (Purnama et al., 2022; Ramsdal et al., 2015; Rohmalimna et al., 2022; Shehni-Yailagh et al., 2014; Yaffe, 2023).

On the other hand, parenting styles also affect students' school truancy. Hostile-restrictive parents, whose hostile behavior is more based on punishment (Yaffe, 2023), along with the strictness and severe restrictions they impose on their children, create a sense of intense hostility in their children (Garcia et al., 2020). The inability to express this feeling of hostility leads to anger in the child. The combination of hostility and freedom results in the most aggressive behavior in these children (Peng et al., 2021). Some studies have shown that parents of delinquent children exhibit this pattern (Rohmalimna et al., 2022). In this style, parents are punitive, restrictive, demanding, and explicit, while their responsiveness to the child's needs is minimal. These parents force their children to obey and respect them (Fong et al., 2021). They impose severe restrictions and control on their children and have minimal verbal exchanges with them. They believe that their children should be obedient without any consideration (Purnama et al., 2022).

Additionally, one of the underlying factors in school truancy is student-related environmental factors. In this regard, teacher-student relationships are among the familial variables that seem to play a fundamental role in school truancy. The environment in which students study can provide a context that creates different levels of positive and negative emotions towards school (Li et al., 2022). Today, with the use of psychological and educational learning theories, new methods of teaching have been developed, and their usefulness depends on the presence of an appropriate educational atmosphere in the classroom. The presence of an appropriate educational atmosphere largely depends on the style the teacher uses to manage the class (Zhu et al., 2022). Communication in teaching is essential and plays a fundamental role in effective teaching, and the assessment of the strength or weakness of a teacher's teaching lies in how they establish communication with their students (Tackie, 2022); therefore, establishing communication between the teacher and the student to create the best possible learning environment is one of the teacher's primary responsibilities in the classroom (Kasperski & Blau, 2023). Therefore, considering the economic, social, familial, and individual problems of students and school-related factors, solutions for preventing and solving this problem can be achieved. Given the stated issues, this research is conducted due to the importance and novelty of the topic. Moreover, few studies have been conducted on this subject in Iran. Based on the mentioned issues, it is expected that the status of learners will improve after presenting this research; therefore, the aim of the present study was to provide a

conceptual model of school truancy based on parental conflict and parenting style in high school students.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This research is fundamental in terms of its goal and correlational structural modeling in nature. The research population included all high school students in Islam Abad Gharb during the 2020-2021 academic year, with 1523 boys, 1453 girls, and a total of 2976 students. The sampling method of this study was a two-stage cluster sampling. Two regions were randomly selected from the areas of Islam Abad Gharb, and from these two regions, five schools were randomly selected, totaling 500 students. According to the structural equation modeling methodology based on the proposed model by Tabachnick and Fidell (2001), the sample size can be determined between 2.5 to 10 participants per measured variable (item). Based on this, for determining the sample size (number of items in each questionnaire multiplied by 2.5), the minimum sample size for this study considering the total number of questionnaire items (96 items) is at least 240 participants ($96 * 2.5$). To increase reliability, 500 participants were selected through multi-stage cluster sampling. The criteria for selecting the sample included being a high school student, willingness to participate in the study, absence of serious medical illness, absence of major psychiatric disorders, and lack of substance dependence. Exclusion criteria included having psychiatric disorders, substance abuse, and not answering all the questionnaire items.

The research process was as follows: after preparing the questionnaires and selecting the participants, the research questionnaires were distributed to the students. Necessary explanations were provided by the researcher on how to complete the questionnaires. Participants were asked to request further explanation if they encountered any problems during the questionnaire completion process. Selected students, after consenting to participate in the study and receiving assurance that their information would remain confidential, completed the questionnaires.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Parent-Child Relationship

The Parent-Child Relationship Scale was first developed by Fine, Moreland, and Schubel (1983) to assess the quality of parent-child relationships. The PCRS is a 24-item tool for

assessing adolescents' views on their relationship with their parents. Responses are rated on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (mild) to 7 (severe). The score range is between 24 and 168. Subscales include positive feelings, involvement and enmeshment with the father, communication, and anger. Items 9, 13, and 14 are reverse-scored. Higher scores indicate a good and desirable relationship with the parents, while lower scores indicate less communication and more conflict with the parents. The scale has two forms, one for assessing the child's relationship with the mother and one for assessing the child's relationship with the father. In this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the father conflict subscale were 0.89 and for the mother conflict subscale were 0.92. Additionally, standardized coefficients (factor loadings) in confirmatory factor analysis for the father conflict subscale ranged from 0.64 to 0.84, and for the mother conflict subscale ranged from 0.67 to 0.78 (Tabrizi et al., 2023).

2.2.2. Parenting Styles

This 30-item questionnaire is rated on a 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree) and measures three parenting styles: authoritarian (10 items), authoritative (10 items), and permissive (10 items). It was developed by Buri (1991) based on Diana Baumrind's parenting style theory. This questionnaire assesses adolescents' and young adults' perceptions of their parents' parenting styles (Buri, 1991). The questionnaire is theoretically based on Baumrind's typology of parenting styles (1971). The questionnaire has a 5-point Likert scale, where a score of 1 is given for strongly disagree and a score of 5 for strongly agree. The score range for each subscale is between 10 and 50. Each parent is assessed using a similar form, but specific to either the father or the mother (indicated in the questionnaire). Buri (1991) reported acceptable reliability coefficients for mothers: authoritative 0.78, authoritarian 0.86, permissive 0.81, and for fathers: authoritative 0.92, authoritarian 0.85, permissive 0.77. Similar reliability coefficients were reported by Brozinsky (2004), with internal consistency coefficients for each dimension of the PAQ as follows: for mothers, permissive 0.74, authoritarian 0.85, authoritative 0.82, and for fathers, permissive 0.74, authoritarian 0.87, authoritative 0.85 (Karimzadeh

Navadian, 2023; Razavi, 2024; Shokoohi Yekta & Motamed Yeganeh, 2024).

2.2.3. School Truancy

This scale was developed by Khormae and Saleh Ardestani (2015) and consists of 20 items. The items were extracted through interviews with students and content analysis of these interviews. This scale includes 20 items and two components: academic aversion (10 items) and school truancy (10 items), extracted through interviews with students and content analysis of these interviews. The questionnaire is based on a 5-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The scoring ranges from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The minimum and maximum scores on this scale are 20 and 100, respectively. Higher scores indicate higher levels of school truancy. In the study by Saleh Ardestani and Khormae (2018), the validity of this tool was examined using confirmatory factor analysis. The fit indices (Chi-square = 2.58, RMSEA = 0.06, CFI = 0.96, IFI = 0.97) indicated that the model had a good fit with the data. Cronbach's alpha was used to calculate reliability, with coefficients for the academic aversion subscale at 0.92, the school truancy subscale at 0.83, and the overall scale at 0.93 (Saleh Ardestani & Khormaei, 2019).

2.3. Data analysis

After the questionnaires were completed by the participants, they were collected. In the next stage, the questionnaires were scored, and the data were entered into SPSS software for statistical analysis. SPSS and AMOS software were used to analyze the data and examine the proposed research model. Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, and correlation matrix were calculated to obtain initial information about the measured variables. Structural equation modeling was used to examine the relationships in the proposed model. Several fit indices were used in AMOS software to determine the model's fit.

3. Findings and Results

The mean (standard deviation) age of the participants in the present study was 16.45 (5.29). Descriptive statistics for the research variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Research Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Maximum	Minimum
Positive Feelings	25.81	6.65	39	11
Father Involvement	19.14	4.89	26	9
Communications	23.80	5.57	29	10
Anger	18.01	4.62	26	10
School Truancy	47.59	12.82	89	28
Authoritative Parenting	32.53	9.14	49	11
Authoritarian Parenting	25.24	7.71	47	13
Permissive Parenting	31.28	8.77	46	12

Based on [Table 1](#), the correlation coefficients between the Parent-Child Relationship Scale, school truancy, and parenting styles were statistically significant ($P < 0.05$). Skewness and kurtosis coefficients for the distribution of the research variables' scores indicate normality, as all variables had an absolute skewness coefficient less than 3 and an absolute kurtosis coefficient less than 1, indicating no deviation from normality. Thus, it can be said that the

distribution of research variables is normal. In this study, multicollinearity among variables was examined using tolerance statistics and the variance inflation factor (VIF). The tolerance statistics (and VIF) showed that the tolerance values obtained for the variables were above 0.10, indicating no multicollinearity among the variables. The correlation matrix between the research variables is presented in [Table 2](#).

Table 2

Correlation Matrix Between Research Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Positive Feelings	1							
Father Involvement	.36*	1						
Communications	.62*	.57*	1					
Anger	-.66*	-.53*	-.47*	1				
Authoritative Parenting	.27*	.28*	.39*	-.36*	1			
Authoritarian Parenting	-.33*	.24*	-.48*	.36*	-.44*	1		
Permissive Parenting	.29*	-.22*	.37*	-.44*	-.36*	-.59*	1	
School Truancy	-.42*	-.18*	-.23*	.22*	-.52*	.36*	.59*	1

* $P < 0.01$

Based on [Table 2](#), the correlation coefficients between the subscales of the Parent-Child Relationship Scale, parenting

styles, and school truancy were statistically significant ($P < 0.05$).

Table 3

Model Fit Indices for Structural Equation Modeling

Index	Abbreviation	Acceptable Range	Model Value
Absolute	GFI	.90 - 1	.96
	AGFI	.90 - 1	.97
Comparative	CFI	.90 - 1	.95
	TLI	.50 - 1	.75
	IFI	.90 - 1	.94
	RFI	.90 - 1	.95
	NFI	.90 - 1	.92
Parsimonious	PNFI	.50 - 1	.53
	PCFI	.50 - 1	.54
	RMSEA	.00 - .10	.081
	CMIN/DF	Less than 5	3.88

According to the results in Table 3, each of the model fit indices is between 0 and 1 and all are greater than 0.90, indicating the model's adequacy. In the specified model, the absolute indices (GFI, AGFI) are greater than 0.90, which are considered desirable values. The parsimonious normed and comparative fit indices (PNFI and PCFI) also show acceptable values, each between 0.50 and 1. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) shows a value of 0.081, indicating a good fit of the specified model. The

normalized chi-square value also shows a desirable value of 3.88. In conclusion, the comparison of the absolute fit indices for evaluating the overall model with the cut-off points for each shows that the collected data are within the acceptable range, supporting the specified model. Therefore, the conceptual model of school truancy based on personality, familial, and environmental components fits well with high school students.

Table 4

Effects of Familial Components on School Truancy

Path	b	S.E.	β	P
Anger ---> School Truancy	0.27	0.186	0.23	0.001
Involvement ---> School Truancy	-0.25	0.086	-0.19	0.001
Positive Feelings ---> School Truancy	-0.47	0.120	-0.43	0.001
Communications ---> School Truancy	-0.29	0.094	-0.23	0.001
Authoritative Parenting ---> School Truancy	-0.58	0.136	-0.52	0.001
Authoritarian Parenting ---> School Truancy	0.40	0.104	0.36	0.001
Permissive Parenting ---> School Truancy	0.63	0.075	0.59	0.001

Based on the results in Table 4, the path coefficients between the subscales of the Parent-Child Relationship Scale and school truancy, including involvement ($P = 0.001$, $\beta = -0.19$), positive feelings ($P = 0.001$, $\beta = -0.43$), communications ($P = 0.001$, $\beta = -0.23$) were negative and significant, while anger ($P = 0.001$, $\beta = 0.23$) was positive and significant. Additionally, authoritative parenting style ($P = 0.001$, $\beta = -0.52$) was negatively and significantly related to school truancy, while permissive parenting style ($P = 0.001$, $\beta = 0.59$) and authoritarian parenting style ($P = 0.001$, $\beta = 0.36$) were positively and significantly related to school truancy. Thus, it was concluded that the parent-child relationship and parenting styles are significantly related to school truancy.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this study was to provide a conceptual model of school truancy based on parental conflict and parenting style in high school students. The findings showed that the conceptual model of school truancy based on parental conflict and parenting style fits well with high school students. These findings are consistent with prior studies (Chung et al., 2023; Kritikou & Giovazolias, 2022; Lasky-Fink et al., 2021; Martin et al., 2020; Ramsdal et al., 2015; Shehni-Yailagh et al., 2014).

In explaining these findings, it can be said that parents play an effective role in their children's learning and

academic performance through their emotional and cognitive support. In other words, parental involvement in their children's education increases their motivation and desire to improve themselves, enhance knowledge, and increase learning in the classroom. Parents who are involved in their children's educational process can increase their knowledge, mastery of subject matter, and self-confidence in completing tasks. Studies have also shown that parental involvement has a positive impact on children's interest in completing tasks and managing study time. In fact, parents, by accepting their children, supporting and meeting their needs and desires, increase their individuality, self-regulation, and self-affirmation (Ramsdal et al., 2015), thus helping them significantly in choosing mastery goals.

Regarding the relationship between parental support and performance goals (performance-approach and performance-avoidance), based on the results of the present study, it can be said that parents in our culture emphasize collective values and value approval and encouragement from others (Shehni-Yailagh et al., 2014). In other words, parents approve of being influenced by others and determining behaviors based on others' criteria. As a result, positive interactions between parents and children and supporting them transfer personal values to children, who then follow their parents in setting performance goals or achieving academic results to gain positive judgment from others and avoid negative judgment from others. Additionally, parents' excessive support and over-

involvement in their children's academic process and other matters can explain the relationship between parental support and children's performance-avoidance (Zhu et al., 2022).

Since this research mainly focused on teacher-student relationships rather than individual and personality components of students, it can be argued that the family level, type, and atmosphere do not significantly impact school truancy because adolescents seek maturity and finding their identity in a different sense, thus distancing themselves from family and school. This rebellion leads to separation from family and school, and with the appropriate space created for adolescents and the unsuitable environment in schools, adolescents find themselves forced to distance from family and school, thus moving towards identity formation. Therefore, family atmosphere cannot be significantly considered in the path of identity formation and, consequently, individual school truancy. However, the absence of a mother and a chaotic family can gradually impact individual school truancy, but today's generation is more inclined towards breaking old traditions and laws, with outdated schools being a potential reason for law-breaking and, consequently, school truancy.

5. Limitations & Suggestions

Among the limitations of this research is that it was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, which imposed many restrictions on the researcher, including lack of cooperation from the target sample, limited resources on school truancy, and lack of cooperation from education personnel on the critical and sensitive issue of school truancy. Future research can suggest similar studies be conducted in other cities and even countries to generalize the findings and compare results with pre-COVID-19 times. Additionally, studies can be conducted in elementary and middle schools, and among different types of schools, including non-profit, exemplary, Shahed, and university-affiliated schools. Part of the suggestions relates to educational policies as a broad vision and another part more narrowly to school and family environments. In the educational system, fundamental changes should be considered to provide more interest, motivation, and enthusiasm for students, such as updating educational content, paying attention to pluralism, and emphasizing humanity rather than content-centeredness. Moreover, special attention should be given to teachers' economic status, honor, and social standing, providing more

motivation for teachers, which in turn significantly motivates students. In a more immediate view, the educational environment should move towards more engaging, joyful, and modern schools so that students do not feel alienated from school, seeing it as a military camp from which they need to escape. Workshops, seminars, and congresses should be held to steer the educational environment in this direction.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this article.

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